Rep. Luján Invited to Testify Before the Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming

Washington, DC – Today, Rep. Ben Ray Luján was invited to testify before the Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming for a hearing on Smart Grid technology. The hearing, “Get Smart on the Smart Grid: How Technology Can Revolutionize Efficiency and Renewable Solutions,” explored innovative solutions to develop and implement Smart Grid technology, a priority of the Obama Administration. While serving as the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission Chair, Rep. Luján was involved with promoting renewable energy—including creating a renewable energy portfolio standard, setting net metering rules, and establishing a joint action framework to address climate change with other western states.

“I thank Congressman Luján for his participation in this important hearing,” said **Chairman Ed Markey** of the Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming. “As a former regulatory commissioner who has worked on renewable energy issues on the state and regional level, Congressman Luján brings a unique and valuable perspective as we consider and implement Smart Grid technology.”

“As we train and prepare our young people for the jobs of the future, and make investments in renewable energy, we are faced with a challenge that threatens to minimize the gains we have made in preparing our workforce for a clean energy economy,” said **Rep. Luján**. “Our current electric grid design will not accommodate all of the new renewable energy resources we need, and we are charged with the task of building new transmission while incorporating new technologies that will improve efficiency. We must develop innovative solutions that will allow us to transmit and store renewable energy. I look forward to working with my colleagues as we advance this critical technology.”

Rep. Luján discussed the work taking place in New Mexico, training students for jobs of the future and promoting the development of renewable energy technology. He also focused on New Mexico’s potential to lead the way in Smart Grid technology. Los Alamos National Laboratory is already exploring and developing this technology. They are working to solve the problems that prevent wide-spread distribution of renewable energy.

The hearing was convened because our nation's electric grid is outdated and ill-prepared to handle renewable energy advancement. Historically, large coal, natural gas, and nuclear generators have delivered electricity to passive consumers. Utilities had limited information on grid conditions and limited ability to control and monitor demand-side resources. In 2009, this grid design is not cost beneficial for consumers and will not allow for the integration of the generation resources of the future. Smart grid technologies can alter the way we use electricity, allow distributed generation to be sold to the grid, help utilities to integrate intermittent renewable resources, and allow us to reduce carbon emissions. Moreover, adopting smart grid technologies will save consumers money.

Testifying at the hearing were Tom Casey (CEO of the CURRENT Group), Robert Gilligan (Vice President of Energy T & D at GE), Allan Schurr (Vice President of Strategy and Development, Energy and Utilities at IBM), Shirley Coates Brostmeyer (CEO of Florida Turbine Technologies), Charles Zimmerman (Vice President of International Design/Construction at Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.), and James Hoecker (Hoecker Energy Law & Policy).

FULL REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY:

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee. I am honored to be a part of this very important discussion today. As our country moves toward creating a green economy and reducing our dependence on foreign oil, it is imperative that we not only prepare students for the jobs of the future and assist our growing renewable energy industry, we must build transmission lines that include Smart Grid Technology that will be critical for our future.

New Mexico has always been a leader in energy. In my state, like many around the country, we have an enormous potential to grow renewable generation, like solar and wind power. While traveling my district last week, I had the opportunity to visit the North American Wind Research and Training Center at Mesalands Community College in Tucumcari, New Mexico. There, we have the Northern New Mexico Solar Energy Research Park and Academy, which is growing every day. Students at the Center train for the jobs of tomorrow, learning the mechanics of wind turbines and applying their skills on a full size turbine built on the campus.

As we train and prepare our young people for the jobs of the future, and make investments in renewable energy, we are faced with a challenge that threatens to minimize the gains we have

made preparing our workforce for a clean energy economy. We all know our current electric grid design does not accommodate new renewable energy resources. We are charged with the task of building new transmission while incorporating new technologies that will improve efficiency. We must continue with fundamental research and development in areas such as energy storage and solar generation, already taking place across the country in facilities like Los Alamos National Laboratories. We must develop technologies that have the ability to store millions of watts of electrical energy that can be released back into our electric grid, so we can take full advantage of the abundant renewable potential in the United States. Smart grid is a complex system, and we need to accelerate the use of computer simulation and modeling to build an ideal electric grid—a grid that will support energy efficiency, reduce our use of fossil fuels, lower consumer energy costs and support our growing renewable energy industry as it creates jobs for the future.

At Los Alamos National Laboratory in my district, scientists are exploring the next generation of technologies needed to implement Smart Grid. Los Alamos National Laboratory has adapted the tools we use today for national security to analyze and develop solutions to the instabilities resulting from renewable generation from large-scale renewable facilities, as well as from distributed generation in homes and businesses. To get these solutions into the marketplace, we also need to grow new partnerships between research and development organizations, like our national laboratories, and utilities and industry aimed at accelerating the pace of discovery and commercialization.

As a former public utility commissioner with the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission, I understand the importance, the urgency and the need to improve our existing infrastructure and build a new, more efficient Smart Grid that will allow for the deliverability of new renewable generation, and improve the reliability and security of our nation's power.

Deployment of Smart Grid technologies will create new jobs, facilitate a green economy, and change the way we generate and deliver power –across America and around the world. Investment in the modernization of our electric grid is the next critical step toward a clean energy future, and I look forward to working with my fellow Members of Congress to develop and implement the Smart Grid system. Thank you for your time.